A SECOND LETTER TO A MEMBER Of this Preſent PARLIAMENT, AGAINST Comprehenſion.

By the Author of the former Letter for Liberty of Conſcience.

London, Printed in the Year 1668.

A

SECOND

LETTER

TO A

MEMBER

of this Present

PARLIAMENT

CONCERNING

Comprehension.

By the Author of the former
Letter for Liberty of Conscience.

London, Printed in the Year
1668.

A Second Letter TO A MEMBER Of this preſent PARLIAMENT.

SIR,

I Conceive an univerſal indulgence in Point of Religion not only to be advantagious to the Trade and ſtrength of this Nation, and agreeable to the ſuggeſtions of each private mans breaſt, as well as natural Juſtice, and the determinations of the Scripture and primitive Church: but it is particularly prudential to his Majeſty that now Reigns. For, whatever ſome perſons may ſay, all Monarchies ſubſiſt by the counter-ballance of Factions; and he who muſt ſee with other peoples eyes, and hear with their ears, and act by their Councils, (as great Monarchs muſt alwayes do) becomes obnoxious, and a prey to his followers, and Counſellors, if they too ſtrictly

ly correſpond. During the Miniſtry of the late *Chancellour* how palpably was this truth ſeen! How did he uſurp not only all Power unto himſelf, but even the oſtentation of it; and having by the uniformity of the Church obliged to his Sentiments the Biſhops, how did he eſtabliſh himſelf, and ſeparate the Church of *England* from that correſpondence which it ought to have had with its Head? In the like manner almoſt, when the Biſhops under Queen *Elizabeth* abandoned the Intereſt of the Crown to purſue that of the Pope, that excellent Queen had been deprived of all Soveraignty thereupon, had ſhe not fomented the Puritan-Party. And it is very remarkable that ſhe was very well ſerved, in her Wars, and in her Councils, as long as ſhe uphelo the two Partyes of Puritans and Conformiſts in ſome ballance; but after that ſhe ſuffered the Epiſcopal Party to depreſs the other, and almoſt totally ſubvert it, ſhe was neither well ſerved any where, nor much regarded: Her Biſhops forgot their Paſtoral Cures; her Clergy grew lazy and diſſolute; the Papiſts increaſed; the Proteſtant Religion declin'd; and ſhe lived to ſee her ſelf as little regarded, as is the declining Sun: Whilſt deſpair drove the Puritans to Court the preſumptive Heir: and the growing hopes of the Papiſts directed them alſo thitherwards to ſecure their growth; and Prudence or Court-ſubtilty made thoſe into whoſe Power ſhe had put her ſelf to forecaſt how they might continue with her ſucceſſor thoſe Dignities and Emoluments her favour had promoted them unto, and her indiſcretion had incapacitated her of beſtowing upon others. This ſhe too late diſcovered, and repented of when it was too late to redreſs it: Albeit ſhe had endeavoured by all means to obſcure the pretences of all Heirs apparent, and intrigue the Succeſſion as far as it lay in her Power. I do therefore ſay it is peculiarly neceſſary for a Monarch to eſtabliſh his authority by

ſuch

ſuch a ballance of Factions, as many Pſeudo-Politicians decry now, who little apprehend how undeniable a Truth this is in a Monarchy ſupported by Laws and not Armies; and in which the ſupream Authority is more limited then in deſpotical Governments, and yet in the laſt ſort of Governments this courſe is prudential.

And further, Liberty of Conſcience will infinitely contribute to the ſecurity of his Majeſties Government. Upon this account the Nation is very well ſatisfied with him, as it is evident by their acquieſcing, notwithſtanding the ſeveral opportunities, which the Landing of the *Dutch*, the Fire of *London*, and other junctures of affairs preſented them with. How willingly have they paid their Taxes? How courragiouſly have ſeveral that were Sectaries fought againſt the *Dutch*? Beſides, the falſhood and baſeneſs of their former Leaders, hath made the followers of the ſeveral Parties ſo jealous of them, that they would willingly abandon all thoſe ſuſpicious adhærencies, to live peaceably according to their Conſciences under his Majeſty: not being willing to be cheated a ſecond time by ſpecious pretences. And this is a thing evident to any that ſhall conſider how the leading Perſons of *England* have loſt their followers, ſo as not to be able to engage them implicitly to any action, or fix them to follow their fortune by any perſonal affection. If it be thus, why do you go about to give theſe perſons a ſtrength, and force under their ſhelter a Party ſo formidable, whether they will or no? Theſe great, theſe leading perſons, that now ſeem ſo powerful will be but ſo many ſingle perſons, and of a ſuſpected honeſty, if you eſtabliſh but Liberty of Conſcience. All Parties will adhere to the King as their Patron, to the Monarchy as their Protection, and avoyd a Commonwealth, which can never be eſtabliſhed by men of ſo corrupt Principles, as thoſe old Leaders of theirs have ſhewed themſelves to be.

I shall now present you with those further considerations (I promised you) about *Comprehension* upon equivocal subscriptions and condescentions; and illustrate further the ineffectualness of general Confessions to be subscribed unto. Consider that when the Question about the Divinity of Christ was fiercely agitated in the Church, there was a Council called at *Nice* †, where the *Nicene* Creed was made: Three hundred and eighteen Bishops there did determine the controversie, and framed a Creed, to which all that were accounted Orthodox should subscribe. This was so far from establishing the peace of the Empire, that it divided it more. The *Arrians* got another general Council at *Ariminum* †, and there determined the Poynt quite otherwise concerning the Trinity; and by 630 Bishops decreed another Creed and Test of Orthodoxy. This uniformity was as troublesome to the prevailing *Arrians*, as the other had been to the Orthodoxarians. After this another Council was called at *Sirmium* †, there *Hosius*, Bishop of *Corduba* did publickly ask forgiveness for having troubled the Church with the disputes about the Trinity, and the distinctions of Essence and Person in the Deity. Another kind of comprehensive Creed was framed, to which both Partyes might agree, and be reputed Orthodox †. But behold the fate of this Comprehension! neither Party was satisfied; neither Party abandoned their Sentiments; but grew up as Factions, and the Empire was divided, and distracted, and weakned, till *Theodosius* the great restored a perfect Liberty of Conscience: and the very memory of the Council of *Sirmium*, and it's *Comprehensive* Creed, is almost totally extinguished.

† All this is manifest out of the Hystories of those times: particularly out of *Mariana* his *Spanish* History: and the Writings of St *Hilary*, who was an enemy to the *Arrians*, and lived in those times.

I will trouble you with another instance under *Charles* the fifth, when the *Lutherans*, *Zuinglians*, *Calvinists*, *Carolstadians*, *Anabaptists*, and other Sects divided and distracted the *Popish Empire* of *Germany*: after

after ſundry Warrs and Factions which weakned the *Empire* againſt the *Turks* and other neighbouring Enemies, ſeveral conferences were had, as betwixt *Bucer* and *Julius Pflugg*; betwixt *Luther* and *Cardinal Cajetan*, and others about ſome way of moderation for healing thoſe *Eccleſiaſticall* breaches: Several things were condeſcended unto on both ſides, and forms agreed unto ſometimes in order to a mutual accommodation of that Schiſme. But with what ſucceſs? Each party thought the other rather to deſign the ſubverſion then Converſion of the other; each was jealous of the other that they would but temporiſe at beſt; and perhaps only make uſe of thoſe ambiguous conceſſions, or condeſcentions, to the prejudice of the other: So that they alwayes became ineffectual. At length ſome moderate and Pious perſons contriv'd a mixed Religion out of *Popery* and *Proteſtancy*, in which Godly *Melanchton*, as well as *Caſſander*, had an hand; but this diſpleaſed all parties, and the intereſted perſons in framing of it became hated and deteſted by their followers. How many ſucceſſeleſs contrivances have there been to reconcile the *Lutherans* and *Calviniſts*; and have not both Parties at laſt found that the moſt aſſured way for them to live peaceably together, was not to confound the two partyes by uniting Churches, but by living comfortably together under different Confeſſions, Ceremonies, and Church-Government? Put caſe here in *England* ſome *Presbiterian* Miniſters, that are now leaders of that party, ſhould be admitted into the Miniſtry upon ſuch conditions as have been propoſed: Can any man who knows that party imagine the peace of this Nation ſecured? Nay, can any man think it ſo ſecure as it is now? If theſe poſtliminary Divines muſt declare they conform to the Service, and leſs offenſive Ceremonies, and *Epiſcopacy*, as convenient in themſelves; or only becauſe impoſed, though.

though otherwise a *Directory*, and the old *Synodical* way were better? If the former, then they conform only as so many single persons, and the acquests of such men is not worthy of the concessions; If the latter, it is evident, that the peace of the Nation is more endangered then ever, when we give a sort of men opportunity to inform the souls incharged to them, that *Episcopacy* is useless, and of humane (if not Antichristian) constitution; that all these Ceremonyes and the Service of the Church are unnecessary and impertinent, or steril acts of Devotion, to which they submit on no better terms then *Peter du Moulin* offered to Preach the reformed Religion upon at *Rome*; he avowed he would be content to Preach in a fooles Coat so the *Pope* would but let him Preach there. If they give their flocks this testimony of their Zeal, that they will upon such difficult termes submit to become their Pastors: Let every man examine if it will not unavoidably follow that these obliged Parishoners shall indeavour to discharge their Pastors from such impositions as are burthensome to them *in carrying on the work of the Lord*; and hinder them in that edification, unto which were these *Episcopal* Courts, and Church Ceremonies, and Service removed: Or can we think ambition, or pretenses of Zeal will be so extinguished in them, that they will not go about to signalize themselves in their old formalities *of propagating the Gospel*, whereby to draw upon them the eyes of the Nation for their exemplary pains and Piety? and if this happen, what circumstances is the Government of this Nation reduced unto? If they be preferred, the National Church of *England*, is ruined, and all the Gentry and Nobility: If they be not; then what clamours must we expect from the populace for the contempt and disregard of Godly and Orthodox men? I conceive the best way to avoid these difficulties, is by establishing

ing the Church of *England* as it is with its publick emoluments and honours, with the due regulation of the *Episcopal Clergy*, the discountenancing of *Arminianisme*, and a pious and laborious Catechising, I am confident one age will restore us to our ancient glory. It is but just that publick Churches should be like publick High-wayes, at the Kings disposal, and not for every man to build upon. So the demesnes and revenues belonging thereto ought to be continued without grudging, since no particular man is damnified by them: The Tithes are no particular mans losse, being not bought, nor sold, nor any part of his lease; so that no Sect ought to refuse this payment. But, continuing this, let them maintain their Teachers and Churches themselves, if they will decline the publick assemblyes of the English Church. By this Toleration we shall reap these benefits: First the *Episcopal Clergy* will be reduced to a greater diligence in Preaching, and Catechising, a more exemplary life then is now found among them: Next the *Presbyterians* and others not having the disposal of their Parsonages to their creatures, will not be able to give those incouragements to them that are factiously bent, which they will have by this *comprehension*. And they will be so watched by the Sectaries on one hand (who must fall, if they rise) and the Church of *England* on the other, as never to be able to sway the ballance of this Nation. And the Sectaries will acknowledge their subsistance to be so dependant upon the prosperity of the Church of *England*, that they will reckon the enemies of the Church to be theirs. And all Parties will be zealous to protect and support this ballance of the Nation, under this *Monarchy*, least any other Governour or Government should alter their condition. All will strive to advance trade, all will strive to serve so gracious a King; all will decline or indeavour to suppress any

growing faction by which they may run an hazzard of ruine. No ambition will move the generality, who will have all they can desire, except the power to oppress others: And for the Grandees, they must be quiet and publick spirited: when all pretences of grievances upon the people are removed: which is the only course they can take to inviegle a party to follow them, since all other obligations of villenage is extinct. Thus the King shall reign absolutely over the persons and hearts of his subjects; and be as much redoubted abroad, as beloved at home: Riches and plenty shall be the consequences of his united strength; unconstrained piety shall flourish, hypocrisie vanish, and *Morality* be restored again. But if this course be not taken, the *Dutch* and *New England* will draw from us the trading and industrious part of our Nation, with their stocks: our reputation and forreign leagues will decline with our interest and strength: Continual fears and jealousies will possess the Land; the *Episcoparians* will not be able to bear up against the *Presbyterians*, and the Sectaries will contribute to their own and the general ruine, whilest the Land may become in fine a prey to the powerful and ambitious *French*; or be over-run by the rich, united, active, subtile *Papists*, betwixt whom and any *Protestant* there is no tye Religious, Moral, or Generous.

FINIS.

POSTSCRIPT.

I Thought fit to remark unto you (that there may be no miſtake in any that have a mind to object to my former Letter) how conſiderable a Party of Diſſenters were tollerated by the *Jewes*: For in all they are computed under *Solomon* to be above 150000 men, beſides women and children, 2 *Chron.* 2. 17. a fair Number for *Non-conformiſts* to be in two or three *Engliſh* Counties.

If any are diſpleaſed at *Calvin's* ſaying St. *George* was an *Arrian*, I am afraid they will be more angry with *Hottingerus*, who (I think) in his Oriental Hiſtorie (pag. 100.) doth demonſtrate from the *Turkiſh* Writers, that St. *George* was a *Mahumetan*; is one of the *Turkiſh* Saints: he was cut in pieces, and put into a pot to ſtew, and after that (ſay they) revived and lived as a *miraculous* confirmation of the *Muſulmens* Faith.

Thus is our *Calender* filled with *Jewes*, *Turks*, and *Papiſts*, whilſt our *Priſons* are filled with *Proteſtants*.